

## A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS FACED BY RURAL WOMEN SHGS IN DIBRUGARH DISTRICT, ASSAM

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### ABSTRACT

*The study is to find out the various problems of rural women self-help groups (SHGs). It has been conducted in the rural areas of seven development blocks in Dibrugarh district for entrepreneurship development of rural women SHGs under SGSY schemes. The primary data have been collected through interview methods of rural women members on the problems and prospects of rural women SHGs. One hundred sixty rural women SHGs are selected through clustered purposive sampling method for the field survey. The study conclude that lack of finance, household poverty, low market rate, lack of education, lack of communication network are the major problems faced by various rural women members of each selected SHGs. The study also tries to suggest a measure for future prospects of rural women SHGs.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social Problems, Economic Problems, Financial Problems & Reasons for Various Technical Problems

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### INTRODUCTION

Women have been successful in breaking their confinement within the limits of their homes by entering into various kinds of professionals and services. Women entrepreneurs have proved to be on par with their men counterparts in business acumen and are emerging as smart and dynamic entrepreneurs. There are many reasons for women to enter into entrepreneurial ventures in a male pre-dominantly society. Entrepreneurship among women is an important avenue through which women can overcome their subordination within the family and the society as a whole. Therefore, development of entrepreneurship among women has received special attention of policy makers. In this direction, a special character in the seventh plan has converted into integration of women in economic development. The new industrial policy has stressed the need for conducting special Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) for women. This programmes creates entrepreneurial awareness among them.<sup>(1)</sup>

The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators. They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacture and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. In developing countries a large section of the women are vulnerable and marginalized due to lack of education, access to resources and employment opportunities.<sup>(2)</sup> All around development and harmonious growth of a nation is possible only when women and men are equal partners in the development process. Since the 1970s, the idea and practice of self help has developed world wide as a major social phenomenon for poverty alleviation and women empowerment. Self-help groups (SHGs) are considered as one of the means to empower women by providing easy access to credit. This easy access to credit would enable women to participate in income generating activities by establishing micro enterprises and in

the process enhances well being in the household. The ability to generate own income would perhaps help women to derive more power and choices related to household decision making in consumption, education and health related matter and also open up opportunities to take part in other socio-economic activities.<sup>(3)</sup> The major problems of rural women are poverty and unemployed. So, the rural women are engaged in small-scale entrepreneurs programs with the help of SHGs. Through this SHGs, the rural women are economically empowered and attaining status in family and community.<sup>(4)</sup> SHGs are generally facilitated by NGOs and increasing advice and train members in a variety of on- and off-farm income – generating activities.<sup>(5)</sup>

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify and analyses various problems of rural women SHGs.
- To suggest measures for future prospects of rural women SHGs.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the rural women SHGs of SGSY schemes from seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district for entrepreneurship development in rural areas. The scope of the study mainly encompasses on various socio-economic, financial and technical problems faced by the rural women SHGs who run their group business regularly till 2013. So that, these rural women entrepreneurs can further establish and manage their own way rural enterprise smoothly and efficiently. The local government, banks and other NGOs are providing adequate information, support and encouragement to various rural women SHGs.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited only to the rural women SHGs in rural areas from seven development blocks of Dibrugarh districts. Many rural women members are unable to give actual information about the problems and prospects in SHGs business. Insufficient time, lack of vehicles in some part of rural place, some rural women members went for agricultural work in farm field or some other places for their personal activities during the survey are the main constraints for the study. So the study found it difficult to observe more information from some rural women members of SHGs. But the study tries to collect information from other members in each SHG, particularly from group leaders who are more aware about the problems of rural women SHGs for rural entrepreneurship development.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is based on primary data and secondary data. The primary data are collected from field survey through personal interview of rural women SHGs. The rural women SHGs are selected randomly from seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. The seven development blocks are:

- Khowang development block
- Barbaruah development block
- Lahoal development block
- Panitola development block
- Tengakhat development block
- Joypur development block
- Tingkhong development block

The Researcher has taken 160 rural women SHGs randomly from seven development blocks. So out of 10 members, 5 rural women members are selected from each sample rural women SHGs in seven development blocks. So, total 800 rural women members are selected for the purpose of the present study. For analyzing the data, simple statistical tool like percentage, average have been used. The secondary data are collected from research articles, paper, books, offices, websites, etc.

**Table 1: Sampling Frame of the Study**

<b>Blocks</b>	<b>Sample Rural Women SHGs</b>	<b>Total Selected Respondents from Sample Rural Women SHGs</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondent Rural Women SHGs</b>
Khowang block	39	195	24
Barbaruah block	21	105	13
Lahoal block	9	45	05
Panitola block	23	115	14
Tengakhat block	28	140	17
Joypur block	23	115	14
Tingkhong block	17	85	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>97</b>

**Source:** DRDA Dibrugarh district, year 2009-13

Table 1 shows that from seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district, out of 160 rural women SHGs, 39 rural women SHGs were selected in Khowang development block. Each group consist of 10 members which the study have selected 5 members from each group in seven development blocks. So, out of 800 members, total 195 rural women were selected from Khowang block to identify various problems and prospects of rural women SHGs. Similarly, 21 rural women SHGs were selected in Barbaruah development block and 105 rural women members were selected from this group. In Lahoal development block, only 9 rural women SHGs were selected and 45 rural women members were selected from rural women SHGs. In Panitola development block, 23 rural women SHGs were selected and 115 rural women were selected from these group. In Tengakhat development block, 28 rural women SHGs were selected and 140 rural women were selected from these groups. In Joypur development block, 23 rural women SHGs were selected and 115 rural women were selected from these groups. In Tingkhong development block, 17 rural women SHGs were selected and 85 rural women were selected from these groups.

Therefore, it seems that out of 800 respondents, the highest 24 percent of rural women respondents is from Khowang development block. This is followed by Tengakhat development block consists of 17 percent rural women respondent which rank second, Panitola development block and Joypur development block consists of 14 percent rural women respondent which rank third, Barbaruah development block consists of 13 percent respondent which rank fourth, Tingkhong development block consists of 10 percent which rank fifth and the lowest respondent among other blocks is only 5 percent from Lahoal development block.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The Researcher has taken the data to identify and analyse the various problems faced by selected rural women SHGs in seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. The problems of rural women SHGs from seven development blocks are economic problems, social problems, financial problems and various reasons for technical problems.

**Table 2: Economic Problems of Rural Women SHGs in Seven Development Blocks**

Economic Problem	Khowan-g Block	Barbarua-h Block	Lahoal Block	Panitola Block	Tengakhat Block	Joypur Block	Tingkh-ong Block	Weighted score	Rating (percent)	Rank
Low Income	20	20	10	10	20	15	13	89	15	2
Low Saving	18	20	10	24	25	07	14	100	16	1
Low Economic Activity	25	10	02	10	13	15	5	55	9	8
Less Accumulation of Asset	30	15	03	24	25	10	10	87	14	3
Insufficient time	22	10	09	12	17	08	15	72	12	5
Low market Rate	30	10	01	10	10	21	10	62	11	6
High Expenditure	35	10	06	10	19	30	10	85	13	4
Low production	15	10	04	15	11	09	08	58	10	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Field survey

Table 2 shows the economic problems faced by the rural women of SHGs in seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. The study observed that low saving among the rural women occupies the first position which consists of 16%. This is mainly due to consumption of domestic household products or asset. Some rural women also need to provide fees for poor health of family members and for their children's education through earning income from SHGs business. So, it is very difficult to manage their saving from the income generation of SHGs. The second position of economic problems in which the rural women faced is low income consists of 15%. The rural women opined that there is an operating gap in SHGs. Some members are dropped out from the group as they are not getting sufficient time to co-operate with other members in SHGs. Moreover, some rural women also observed that due to low market rate and low production of economic activity, their SHGs business are not operating successfully. For this reason most of the rural women have low income from SHGs. The third position of economic problem is less accumulation of asset which consists of 14%. This mainly depends on income and saving from SHGs business. Due to low income and low saving, the rural women members are unable to purchase household asset. So, accumulation of asset is less among the rural women of SHGs. The fourth position of economic problems among the rural women of SHGs is high expenditure which consists of 13%. Some rural women observed that their expenditures are more among the family members in their rural household. Whatever fund or profit they obtained from the SHGs, has been consumed by the family members for reasonable purposes. The fifth position of economic problems among the rural women of SHGs is insufficient time which consists of 12%. This is mainly due to household activities and also for own family responsibilities. Some rural women are not getting sufficient time to co-operate or participate in SHGs business. The sixth position of economic problems among the rural women of SHGs is low market rate which consist of 11% which is mainly due to low demand and seasonal economic activities of SHGs. This economic problem of low production is similar to low market rate which consist of 10% occupies seventh position, followed by low economic activity which consist of 8% which occupies eighth position faced by few rural women SHGs. The study has identified that due to low production and seasonal business, some rural women have low economic activity in SHGs.

**Table 3: Social Problems of Rural Women SHGs in Seven Development Blocks**

Social Problems	Khowan-g Block	Barbar-uah Block	Lahoal Block	Panitola Block	Tengakhat Block	Joypur Block	Tingkhong Block	Weighted Score	Rating (percent)	Rank
Low education	30	20	10	20	21	20	10	101	16	1
Burden upon household works/family responsibilities	29	10	6	15	23	15	15	84	13	2
Poor livelihood status	31	15	5	22	10	18	10	80	13	2
Poor co-operation	14	12	6	12	10	14	10	64	11	4
Lack of information and knowledge of business	25	10	04	15	10	16	10	65	11	4
Less self-confident	25	10	06	11	21	11	10	69	12	3
Less communication	28	13	03	10	25	10	11	72	12	3
Less benefit from SHGs	13	15	05	10	20	11	09	70	12	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Field survey

Table 3 shows the social problems faced by the rural women members of SHGs in the seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. The study observed that low education is the major problem among rural women members which occupies the first position consist of 16%, as majority of rural women are illiterate and have less experience of doing individual/group business. Due to this reason, rural women are not having any knowledge about banking facilities, marketing facilities, communication facilities, etc. However, some rural women opined that through government schemes and training, they learned about various social network facilities. But the study found that a large number of rural women in SHGs are less educated. Burden upon household activities, family responsibilities and poor livelihood status equally occupies second position which consists of 13%. The rural women in the area under the study stated that they have more family responsibilities such as for their own child, husband and other members of the family. The rural women need to do lot of household works to manage their own rural livelihood status and for future benefit. In the third position of social problem among rural women SHGs is less self-confident which consist of 12%, equally followed by less communication and less benefit from SHGs. This is mainly due to fear of less profit in SHGs business and unequal distribution of profit among the rural women members in the SHGs. So, some rural women have less confident and less benefit from the SHGs. In the fourth position of social problems occupies poor co-operation among the rural women comprising of 11%, equally followed by lack of information and knowledge of business consist of 11% which is similar to low education problems. Some rural women members are unable to co-operate equally with the other members in SHGs due to lack of time, family responsibilities, household activities and lack of profit.

Since, majority of the rural women members are illiterate, they are not having any own idea about new information of doing individual/group business. So, it mainly depends on educational training in SHGs business which the local government, banks and offices must facilitate the development of rural women SHGs in the Dibrugarh district.

**Table 4: Financial Problems of Rural Women SHGs in Seven Development Blocks**

Financial Problem	Khowang Block	Barbar-uah Block	Laho-al Block	Panitola Block	Teng-akhat Block	Joypur Block	Tingkhong Block	Weighted Score	Rating (percent)	Rank
Shortage of working capital	20	14	08	20	20	20	10	94	15	2
Difficulties of Finance	28	22	09	22	30	25	30	138	24	1
Lack of Profit	15	20	05	20	20	20	10	95	15	2
Problems in getting Loan, subsidy and Revolving Fund	32	16	05	15	20	10	09	75	13	3
High Interest rate	16	10	03	08	20	10	06	57	10	4
Less availability of credit	22	07	02	15	12	11	05	52	9	5
High cost of Economic Activity	20	05	03	10	04	06	07	35	5	6
Lack of support from obtaining Fund	21	06	05	01	03	05	04	23	4	7
Improper Maintenance of Account	21	05	05	04	01	08	04	27	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Field survey

Table 4 shows the financial problems faced by rural women members of SHGs in seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. Here, the majority of rural women opined that finance is their main problems to manage their rural livelihood status. The study observed that local governments are providing fund/subsidy to various rural women SHGs in Dibrugarh. But sometimes the rural women are unable to operate various economic activities through this fund. This is mainly due to shortage of fund. From this fund, which the rural women from SHGs obtain profit, it is very difficult to manage their household activities. So, difficulties in finance occupies first position which consists of 24% among the rural women in SHGs. Lack of profit occupies the second position of financial problems faced by rural women in SHGs which consist of 15%, equally followed by shortage of working capital consist of 15%. Some rural women observed that due to lack of economic activity, not co-operating equally, not attending or participating the meeting regularly, dropping out from the SHGs groups for household problems, not depositing the money in time, their SHGs business have less income from the other SHGs. Shortage of working capital is similar to the difficulties of finance. The study observed that before operating any kind of business, working capital is very important. So the rural women of each SHGs opined that due to shortage of working capital, their groups are unable to operate regularly. The study observed that if the working capital is more, then more economic activities can be obtained from the local market. And if the members of SHGs have obtained various ideas of doing individual/group business, then the business of SHGs can be improved more properly in the future. In the mean time, some rural women SHGs remain in stop gap position due to shortage of economic activity. For this reason, some rural women of SHGs are not getting any profit/loan equally from the SHGs. The third position occupies the financial problems of getting loan/subsidy and revolving fund which consist of 13%. The rural women of some SHGs

observed that it takes a long time of getting a loan or revolving fund. Various formalities are required to be submitted to both offices and local government. The fourth position occupies the high rate of interest of rural women in SHGs which consist of 10%. Due to lack of repayment of loan, the rural women of some SHGs need to pay high rate of interest. The fifth position occupies less availability of credit among the rural women in some SHGs which consist of 9%. This is mainly due to shortage of fund in SHGs and due to lack of depositing a borrowing fund from the SHGs. So, for this reason some rural women in some SHGs are getting less credit facilities. The sixth position occupies high cost of economic activity in rural women SHGs which consist of 5%, equally followed by improper maintenance of account among the rural women of SHGs which consist of 5%. The study observed that some rural women SHGs need to obtain large number of economic activity for better quality and for high demand in the local market such as poultry, piggery, goatery, flower nursery, etc., for which there is a high cost involved. As majority of rural women are illiterate, some members are unable to maintain proper accounts in the SHGs. But the study observed that now-a-days most of the rural women in various SHGs have the knowledge of banking facilities. The rank of the seventh position as per the Table 2.3 is lack of support from office/government which few rural women of SHGs have faced, consist of 4%. These rural women opined that sometimes they are getting less support from the office/government, as they are unable to attend the training regularly in time provided by the local government.

**Table 5: Reasons for Technical Problems of Rural Women SHGs in Seven Development Blocks**

Technical Problems	Khowang Block	Barbaru-ah Block	Lahoal Block	Panitola Block	Tengak-hat Block	Joypur Block	Tingkho-ng Block	Weighted Score	Rating (percent)	Rank
Unable to read and write	30	15	08	21	35	25	20	124	20	1
Lack of business idea	33	20	05	14	21	13	30	103	16	3
Less improvement in SHGs business	24	10	05	10	20	10	05	60	10	5
Lack of technical knowledge about social networks like banks, NGOs	35	20	23	17	24	19	07	110	18	2
Lack of Training Facilities and services	28	20	01	20	10	10	08	71	12	4
Unskilled Rural women	20	10	03	13	20	22	05	71	12	4
Shortage of Electricity	25	10	10	20	10	16	10	76	12	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 5 shows the value of various technical problems faced by the rural women SHGs in seven development blocks of Dibrugarh district. The study observed that low education is the major problem in which a large number of rural women have suffered in SHGs and consist of 20% occupying the first position as seen in Table 2.4. In the second position, it is seen that lack of technical knowledge about other social network which consist of 18%. The study observed that some rural women in SHGs are having less experience about banking facilities, marketing facilities, communication facilities

etc., due to lack of training and support in SHGs. In the third position, it is seen that lack of business idea which consist of 16% is similar to lack of technical knowledge faced by the rural women in SHGs. In the fourth position observed that lack of training facilities and service faced by rural women in SHGs which consist of 12%, equally followed by unskilled rural women and shortage of electricity which consist of 12%. The study found that some rural women are unable to attend the training regularly due to domestic household work, family responsibilities, and insufficient time. So, these unskilled rural women in SHGs are not getting any adequate idea or knowledge for operating the SHGs. They just attend the business with other members in SHGs. Moreover, some rural women in SHGs observed that in case of rainy days, due to bad weather, there is always a power cut in their respective villages. So, some rural women found it very difficult to develop and manage the economic activities such as poultry in various SHGs. Fifthly, it has been observed that the factor less improvement in SHGs which consist of 10% among the rural women SHGs. Some rural women SHGs are not improving properly due to lack of ideas and shortage of working capital in SHGs.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- By identifying the various economic problems, social problems, financial problems and technical problems amongst the selected rural women members in SHGs, the Researcher found that in case of economic problems, majority of the rural women are having low saving which consist of 100% highest weighted score. And some rural women SHGs have low production which consist of 58% lowest weighted score amongst the other rural women members in SHGs.
- In social problems, majority of the rural women members in SHGs have low education which consist of 101% highest weighted score. And very few rural women in some SHGs have low co-operation which consist of 64% lowest weighted score among the other rural women members in SHGs.
- In financial problems, majority of the rural women are facing difficulties in finance which consist of 138% highest weighted score. And very few rural women are facing lack of support from the offices which consist of lowest weighted score 14% among the members in SHGs.
- In technical problems, majority of the rural women members are unable to read and write which consist of 124% weighted score. And very few rural women are not having their own idea of business which have lowest weighted score 60% among the rural women members in SHGs.

## SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- By identifying the various economic problems, social problems, financial problems and technical problems, the researcher observed that low savings, difficulties in availing finance and low level of education and unable to read and write are the first major problems for rural women SHGs. So, the governments must provide loan at free interest rate and must provide educational training programmes to the unskilled rural women members of SHGs. The rural women have to enhance adequate knowledge in availing banking facilities, marketing facilities, communication facilities and explore alternate business opportunities for self employment.
- Loan can also be provided to the rural women members of various SHGs in case of emergency needs for meeting their rural livelihood problems in the rural areas.
- All the members in each selected SHGs of Dibrugarh district must get an equal opportunity for performing



various economic activities in SHGs. So that, the generation of income in each SHGs is increased regularly.

- No gap shall arise in SHGs business if the rural women can render better quality of various economic activities. As good quality of various economic activities has more demand in the local market and the SHGs can operate their business throughout the years regularly.
- The group leaders of SHGs can provide well defined solutions by organizing proper meetings for the members. SHGs leaders must ask the members to participate regularly in the meetings and find out ways and means to solve various problems related to the SHGs business.
- Better network and communication facilities must be provided in the rural areas, so that, various economic activities of SHGs can be improved and group business can become more profitable.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since various problems still prevail as observed by the researcher, but these rural women remain in the SHGs for future prospects and opportunities and to be self employed. Thus, the government should take necessary steps to provide all sort of assistance in giving motivation and leadership training to encourage the rural women members to take up various economic activities. The rural women should try to get engaged in more number of economic activities, so that, various economic activities can be generated from the SHGs. The study observed that the rural women SHGs can also create assets and stay united by doing group business and further entrepreneurship development. The government must provide higher priority in ensuring proper utilization of funds by the rural women members of SHGs. The study clearly indicates that rural women SHGs have contributed to the economic empowerment of the rural women for entrepreneurship development in rural areas. But, the rural women SHGs should be improved by imparting training to the rural women members for better self-employment opportunities which could yield higher income. The BDO, DRDA agencies, panchayats office are monitoring the funds which are utilized by rural women SHG but need to be enhanced.

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